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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 NEA-10 ISO-00 IO-14 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01

PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15 ACDA-19 DRC-01 /157 W
---------- 105412
R 281700Z NOV 73
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2085
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
USINT ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
USINT CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUR
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY TUNIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 13183

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR XF ET SU VT
SUBJECT: HAILE SELASSIE-NIMEIRI VISIT TO POPE

REF: KHARTOUM 2551, ROME 12992, ADDIS ABABA 13304

SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH INFORMED OF RUMORS, VATICAN STILL HAS RECEIVED NO OFFICIAL APPROACHES RE HAILE SELASSIE-NIMEIRI VISIT.
END SUMMARY.

1. DURING CONVERSATION WITH VATICAN'S MIDDLE EAST DESK OFFICER NOV. 28, WE LEARNED THAT ARCHBISHOP CALABRESE, APOSTOLIC DELEGATE TO SUDAN, HAS FORWARDED TEXT OF STATEMENT IN WHICH PRESIDENT'S OFFICE PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED DECISION OF PRESIDENT NIMEIRI AND HAILE SELASSIE TO VISIT POPE. CALABRESE ALSO INFORMED VATICAN THAT SUDANESE AUTHORITIES HAD NOT RAISED MATTER WITH
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HIM. VATICAN HAS NOW INSTRUCTED CALABRESE DISREETLY TO MAKE

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SOUNDINGS IN KHARTOUM CONCERNING ANNOUNCEMENT.

2. SOURCE SAID NUNCIATURE IN ADDIS ABABA HAS HEARD NOTHING OFFICIALLY FROM EHTIOPIAN GOVERNMENT, HOWEVER, ONE LOCAL CATHOLIC BISHOP INFORMED NUNCIO THAT MINISTER OF THE CROWN HAD MENTIONED TO HIM FEW DAYS AGO THAT PLANS WERE UNDER WAY FOR EMPEROR AND SUDANESE PRESIDENT TO VISIT POPE.

3. VATICAN HAS ALSO HEARD RUMORS THAT ISLAMIC CONFERENCE MAY BE TRYING TO DRAW UP PLAN FOR FUTURE STATUS OF JERUSALEM. SOURCE RECALLED THAT PRESIDENT OF ISLAMIC CONFERENCE, TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN, HAD PAPAL AUDIENCE OCTOBER 9 DURING WHICH HE MENTIONED BRIEFLY MOSLEM PREOCCUPATION FOR FATE OF JERUSALEM AND HOLY PLACES. TO OUR QUESTION, SOURCE REPLIED THAT ARABS HAVE NEVER EXPRESSED TO VATICAN THEIR VIEWS AND DEMANDS RE JERUSALEM, BUT THAT HE EXPECTED THEIR POSITION WOULD BE EXTREMELY HARD LINE AND DIFFICULT TO RECONCILE WITH ISRAELI POSITION.

4. ETHIOPIAN AMBASSADOR TO HOLY SEE, ATO ABATE AGEDE, TOLD US NOV. 27 THAT HE HAS RECEIVED WORD FROM HIS GOVERNMENT THAT EMPEROR AND PRESIDENT NIMEIRI CONSIDERING VISIT TO POPE TO DISCUSS JERUSALEM. HOWEVER, HE ADDED, HE WAS ALSO TOLD NOT TO RAISE SUBJECT WITH VATICAN UNTIL HE INSTRUCTED TO DO SO.

5. COMMENT: SHOULD HE BE ASKED, THERE IS PROBABLY NO REASON WHY POPE PAUL WOULD NOT BE WILLING TO DISCUSS MIDDLE EAST WITH HAILE SELASSIE AND PRESIDENT NIMEIRI. MAIN QUESTION FOR VATICAN WOULD PROBABLY BE TO DETERMINE WHO THESE TWO LEADERS ACTUALLY REPRESENT. IF QUESTION OF VISIT BEING DISCUSSED AT ALGIERS SUMMIT AND IF OTHER ARAB LEADERS AGREE TO NAME NIMEIRI AS MOSLEM SPOKESMAN ON JERUSALEM, THIS WOULD OF COURSE GIVE GREATER IMPORTANCE TO MEETING. WHETHER HAILE SELASSIE COULD BE SIMILARLY DEPTUIZED TO SPEAK FOR CHRISTIAN INTERESTS IN AREA IS HIGHLY PROBLEMATIC. HOLY SEE, IN MANY WAYS,PARTICULARLY WITH ITS DIPLOMATIC MECHANISM, PROBABLY IN BEST POSITION TO SPEAK FOR CHRISTIAN INTERESTS IN HOLY LAND, BUT THERE SOME DOUBT WHETHER OTHER CHRISTIAN GROUPS WOULD BE AGREEABLE. AN EXCEPTION WAS IN JAN. 1964 WHEN POPE PAUL VISITED JERUSALEM AND THEN ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH ATHENAGORAS EXPRESSED TO HIM HOPE THAT CATHOLIC CHURCH WOULD ACT AS DEFENDER CHRISTIAN RIGHTS IN HOLY LAND. VATICAN CONFIDENTIAL

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TODAY SEEMS TO FEEL THAT GREEK PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM WOULD BE RELUCTANT TO SEE CATHOLICS ACT AS REPRESENTATIVES FOR ALL CHRISTIANS. VATICAN HAS IN PAST EXPRESSED TO US ITS REGRETS THAT WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES NOT MORE INTERESTED IN JERUSALEM'S FUTURE. IT MOST UNLIKELY THAT POPE WOULD ASSUME FOR HIMSELF ROLE OF CHRISTIAN INTERLOCUTOR FOR JERUSALEM UNLESS MAJOR CHRISTIAN LEADERS REQUEST THAT HE DO SO. VOLPE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 NOV 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973ROME13183
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: ROME
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t1973118/aaaaafjk.tel
Line Count: 114
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: KHARTOUM 2551, ROME 12992, ADDIS ABA, BA 13304
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 18 SEP 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <18-Sep-2001 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <26-Nov-2001 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

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US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: HAILE SELASSIE-NIMEIRI VISIT TO POPE
TAGS: PFOR, XF, ET, SU, VT
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005